

TESTIMONY ON RAISED BILL NO. 1088, LCO NO. 4945
An Act Concerning Services for Individuals w/ Intellectual Disability

Dear Committee on Public Health,

My name is Brita Darany von Regensburg and I am testifying both as founder and president of Friends of Autistic People, FAP, and as the mother of a young woman with autism who at one time had been a resident of an ICF facility run by a private organization and later at the State operated Regional Center in Norwalk CT. Therefore, my testimony is based on first-hand experience as well as on my broader knowledge of the needs of individuals with autism whose parents are members or supporters of FAP.

The intent of the bill is good provided the implementation will assure that the individuals with I/DD will be served at least as well or better than they are presently served by the State operated facilities. In other words, it is important that the purpose of the bill is not to save funds that will go into the bottomless hole of the State General Funds but directly to the DDS to be used for the benefit of the population the DDS is serving.

My experience at the privately operated ICF facility that was in the “community” was that the staff received low compensation, had little training and experience how to support someone with , did not really care, were often heartless and just glorified babysitters.

At the Regional Center in Norwalk the staff was well paid, they had good benefits so there was little turnover, hence they were quite experienced and caring and were well supported by professional staff on the payroll.

The dilemma is that while the State operated facilities provide superior service, they are inefficient and very expensive due to high overhead and diminishing numbers of consumers, which in turn are due to the court order mentioned in the Bill. The wording of the Bill should clearly state that its intent is to improve the service to the consumers and not just save money to the State.

Therefore the additional language should say that the commissioner should determine the amount of savings materialized from the closing of the State facilities including the potential sale of the real estate and other assets of those facilities. All such saved funds should be added to the DDS budget to be used for staff training and providing higher wages to the direct care staff at new and existing community based group homes.

Experience shows that savings that go into General Funds will disappear and will not improve service to the consumers unless the bill makes specific provisions to limit the use of those funds to the DDS.

In summary I support this bill provided my observations and suggestions are made part of it.